

Getting bees to buzz off

Take steps to keep stinging wasps and other flying pests away from garden, homes

8-29-99

By Larry A. Sagers

Deseret News garden columnist

NOT EVERYTHING ABOUT GARDENING CAN BE PRETTY.

Lovely flowers, tasty vegetables and magnificent trees aside, there is always a downside to being in the garden. At this time of year it has to be the pesky hornets, wasps and yellow jackets.

Having had a daughter, wife, mother and father attacked by these creatures in the past few days and seeing them suffer the results, I finally feel enough is enough. The crazed insects have invaded vehicles, sheds and wood-piles and have started eating whatever fruit the birds haven't found. It's time to get serious about discouraging these pests.

Having said this, I also have to make certain that everyone understands that not all members of the bee family are bad nor do they all cause problems. We are indebted to these insects for pollinating plants so we can enjoy almost all fruits and most vegetables. Most urban areas are so short of bees that we have to do hand pollinating of the fruit or vegetables to get them to form.

Honeybees, leaf-cutter bees and many others are always beneficial, and controls are not recom-

mended. However, some people may have serious reactions to these stings so follow the recommendations for avoiding the pests.

Yellow jackets and paper wasps become rather aggressive in the latter part of the summer and into fall. They start in the spring and feed on nectar and usually cause no problems. When they start to lay their eggs, their need for protein and sugar becomes much greater, and they start looking for meat. If they consume insects, we consider the wasps beneficial and like to have them around, but when they start eating our picnics, our attitude changes. One of their favorite feeding grounds is inside pop cans where they look for sweet liquid. If you do not notice them and try to drink from the can, you may get a nasty surprise.

Both kinds of wasps have lance-like stingers without barbs and can sting repeatedly, whereas honey bees have a barbed stinger and sting only once. They have well-



The biggest problem with wasps is their nasty sting, s



Wasps construct their nests on walls, in trees, shrubs

developed mouth parts for capturing and chewing insects and tongues for sucking nectar and juices. They construct their nests in trees, shrubs or other protected places, inside attics, walls or floors, sheds, under porches and eaves of houses or in soil cavities. Nests are made from wood fiber chewed into a paper-like pulp.

These social wasps live in colonies with workers, queens and

As the name implies, the affected plants suddenly wilt and die because the fungus plugs the vascular system and prevents water movement in the plant.

The fungus is in the soil and will survive for as long as 20 years. There is no practical way to treat the soil, so the only effective way to get around the problem is to grow resistant varieties or use plants that are unaffected by the disease.

Getting rid of wasps

Pick fruits when they ripen. Dispose of any fallen fruit rotting on the ground as it attracts wasps.

Insects are attracted to perfume, hair spray, hair tonic, suntan lotion, aftershave, scented soaps, shampoos and other cosmetics, so avoid using these products when wasps are prevalent. Avoid shiny buckles, earrings and jewelry; bright-colored, flowery prints (especially bright yellow, light blue, orange, fluorescent red); black, wool and loose-fitting clothing that may trap stinging insects.

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Wednesday, Sept. 1: Larry Sagers will discuss "Tasty Autumn Fruits" as part of the Garden Talks in the Park series, 7:30 p.m., Brigham Young Historic Park, State Street and North Temple.

Thursday, Sept. 2: Dr. Tom Parks of NPS Pharmaceuticals will discuss "Grape Growing and Wine Making in Utah," Red Butte Garden, noon. Call 581-8936.

Submit notices three weeks in advance to Garden Tips, Deseret News, P.O. Box 1257, Salt Lake City, UT84110, 237-2150, or e-mail us at garden@desnews.com

eating attracts the wasps.

Keep garbage in tightly sealed containers and clean the refuse cans as often as needed to avoid attracting the pests.

If you are stung, apply a poultice of a meat tenderizer to the wound. If the sting is not deep, this breaks down the components of the sting fluid and reduces the pain. Commercial prescription preparations, antihistamine ointments and tablets reduce reactions to stings. Those who are highly sensitive to stings should consider a desensitization program in an allergy clinic and consult their physician about medical kits for stings.

Aerosol sprays for wasps and hornets are very useful because they will spray up to 20 feet and will literally freeze the flying insects in midair. This reduces your risk because you do not need to get near the nests to control them. The pests become inactive when temperatures cool off, so try to control them at night. Not all of the foragers return to the nests each night so repeat treatments on successive nights to make certain you have complete control.

If the pests persist, there are a number of traps available at local garden centers. They are baited with meat or with a synthetic attractant. They will catch as many as 150 wasps per day, so you must empty them on a regular basis.



Monika offers big bang for homebuilding buck

The Monika (407-05) is a large-size house plan that delivers more for the building dollar. This 3,324-square-foot beauty is ideal for a large family that needs a more manageable, roomy floor design.

The large three-car garage not only has a side door but direct access to the house through the utility room, using a covered breezeway. This is an added advantage

closet space along with vaulted ceilings. One bedroom has its own bathroom, and the other two share a common bathroom. There is a storage area along with the laundry chute off the fourth bedroom. For the family with children in school or for the computer buff, there is a small room that can serve as a study room or computer area.

The walk-through kitchen adds

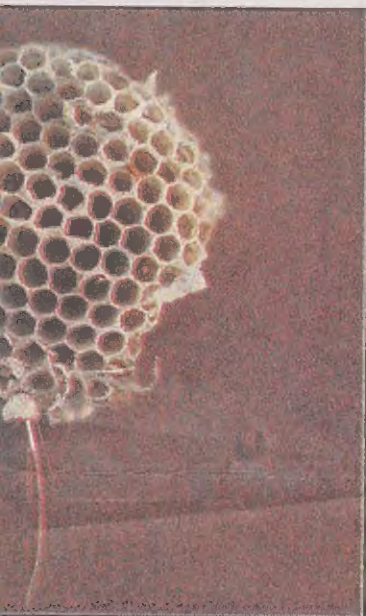
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sheds, garages and other sites of their nests and keep backyard picnics covered and garbage cans sealed.



ther protected places.

ales. Colonies exist only a year and only the queen overwinters—a protected place. The queen emerges during the spring, selects a nest site and builds a small paper nest where the eggs are laid. After eggs hatch, the queen feeds the young larvae. Larvae develop and emerge later as small, infertile males called workers.

By mid-June, the first adult workers emerge and assume the tasks of expanding the nest, forag-



Sprays literally freeze wasps in midair. Traps kill up to 150 wasps per day.

ing for food, caring for the queen and larvae, and defending the colony. Adult reproducers leave the colony to mate. After mating males die, while fertilized queens seek protected places to overwinter. Parent colony workers dwindle, usually leaving the nest, and die, as does the foundress queen.

Abandoned nests rapidly decompose and disintegrate during the winter. Nests inside structures will persist as long as they are dry, but nests are not used again. In the

spring, the cycle is repeated.

Adults feed primarily on items rich in sugars and carbohydrates (fruits, flower nectar and tree sap), and the larvae feed on proteins (insects, meats, fish, etc.). Adult workers chew and condition the meat fed to the larvae. Larvae in return secrete a sugar material relished by the adults. (This exchange of material is known as trophallaxis.) In late autumn, foraging workers (nuisance scavengers) change their food preference from meats to ripe, decaying fruits since larvae in the nest fail to meet requirements as a source of sugar.

The most noticeable difference between yellow jackets and paper wasp groups is the size and configuration of the nests and the size of the colonies. Yellow jackets form large papery nests that get to be near the size of a soccer ball and may house up to 5,000 workers. The paper wasps have open combs, never getting more than 400 cells.

The big problem with these creatures is that they sting. If a wasp flies at or lands on you, never strike it or run away since quick movements provoke attacks. Slowly raise your hands to protect your face and remain calm. Move very slowly to escape. Wasps can fly about six to seven mph, so humans

Because mortgage rates have been trending upward for most of the past two months, homebuyers are increasingly turning to adjustable rate loans to take advantage of low initial payments.



REAL ESTATE WATCH

You can save a bundle right now if you opt for a one-year adjustable mortgage rather than a 30-year fixed rate. On a \$130,000 mortgage at today's rates you would pay about \$825 a month with the ARM and \$984 with the fixed rate.

That's a difference of a whopping \$159 a month or about \$1,900 over one year.

The downside, of course, is that the ARM will adjust at the end of the first year and your payments might rise dramatically after that.

A middle-ground alternative is an adjustable rate mortgage with a longer term, which saves you some money initially and gives you

breathing room before the rate changes. You can find a seven-year ARM at about 7.6 percent, which would give you a monthly payment of \$957 on a \$135,000 mortgage.

Your payments will remain the same for seven years with such an ARM and then convert to a one-year adjustable. But by that time, you probably will have moved or refinanced.

"Fixed-period ARMS are a smart solution for financially savvy first-time and move-up buyers who want to take advantage of low interest rates but still want a stable rate for a set period of time," said Joe Anderson of Countrywide Mortgage, a big national lender.

"With a fixed-period ARM, home-owners may be able to get the initial low interest rate of an adjustable mortgage while having peace of mind, knowing their rate will remain unchanged for a certain length of time."

Weekly surveys by the Mortgage Bankers Association show that the number of home buyers opting for adjustable rate mortgages has risen steadily this summer as interest rates have increased. At the end of May, only 15 percent of homebuyers were choosing ARMS. In mid-August, the number was almost 26 percent.

The mortgage bankers have an updated Web site that might be of interest to potential home buyers. Find it at (www.mbaa.org).

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Are people who search the Internet for houses different than those who do their research the old-fashioned way? Perhaps.

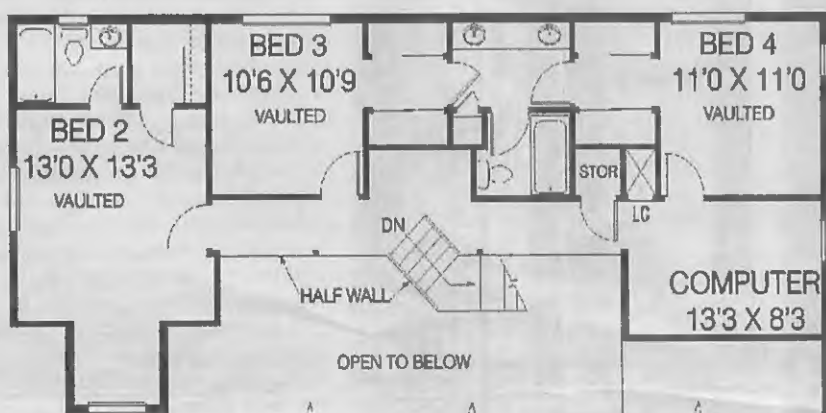
An online survey by the National Association of Home Builders found that 60 percent of those who responded would prefer a custom-built house on their own lot rather than a new house already constructed by a builder. In mail and phone surveys, only 30 percent wanted a custom-built house.

Association president Charles Ruma said the difference might be that people interested in custom homes are more likely than others to search the Internet for a builder while those who want a ready-made house would simply visit models.

But there was no difference in the various surveys on home preference — almost everyone wanted a single-family detached house.

You can find a lot of information about builders at the association's online site, (www.homebuilder.com).

Pamela Reeves writes this column weekly for Scripps Howard News Service.



SECOND FLOOR PLAN
1030 SQ FT



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can outrun them. However, by the time you start running, there could be a dozen or so painful stings provoked by the rapid movement.

Never crush a wasp against your body since it could incite nearby wasps into a frenzied attack. Wasp venom contains chemical "alarm pheromone" that, when released in the air, signals guard wasps to attack and sting.

Keep picnic food covered until eaten, especially ripe fruit and soft drinks. Any scent of food from outdoor cooking or eating attracts the wasps.

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